

REMARKS / ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration of the application and claims in light of the foregoing amendments and following remarks is respectfully requested.

I. Status of the Claims

Claims 1-5, 7, 8 and 11-33 are pending in the present application.

Claims 23-33 have previously been withdrawn from consideration.

Claims 6, 9 and 10 were previously cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter contained therein.

Claims 1-5, 7, 8 and 11-22 were rejected.

Claim 1 has now been amended in order to correct a typographical error. No new matter has been added. Support for the amendment can be found, for example, in original claim 10.

II. Interview Summary

Applicants thank Examiner Mendez and Supervisory Examiner Wilkins for the courtesies extended to Applicants' representative, James C. Signor, in the telephonic Examiner Interview which took place on September 28, 2011 at 11:30 AM EDT. During the Interview, claim 1 of the present application and German Application No. 199 40 698 to Nikola Anastasijevic et al. ("Nikola") were discussed. Applicants pointed out that claim 1 contained a typographical error and that claim 1 should read "the second end of the hanger bar of the anode resting on an anode equalizer bar," not "resting on a cathode equalizer bar." See, for example, original claim 10 of the present application. Applicants have amended claim 1 accordingly in this response. Additionally, during the Interview, it was agreed that Nikola does not disclose or suggest "distributing current between the anode and the cathode" as required by claim 1 at least because the cathode contact bar 6 and the anode contact bar 7 of Nikola (see Fig. 1) are not electrically connected to each other. Rather, each of the hanger bars 8 of Nikola rest at a first side on a respective one of the contact bars 6, 7 and at a second side on a respective one of the electroless, non-conducting support rails 8. See Fig. 1 and col.

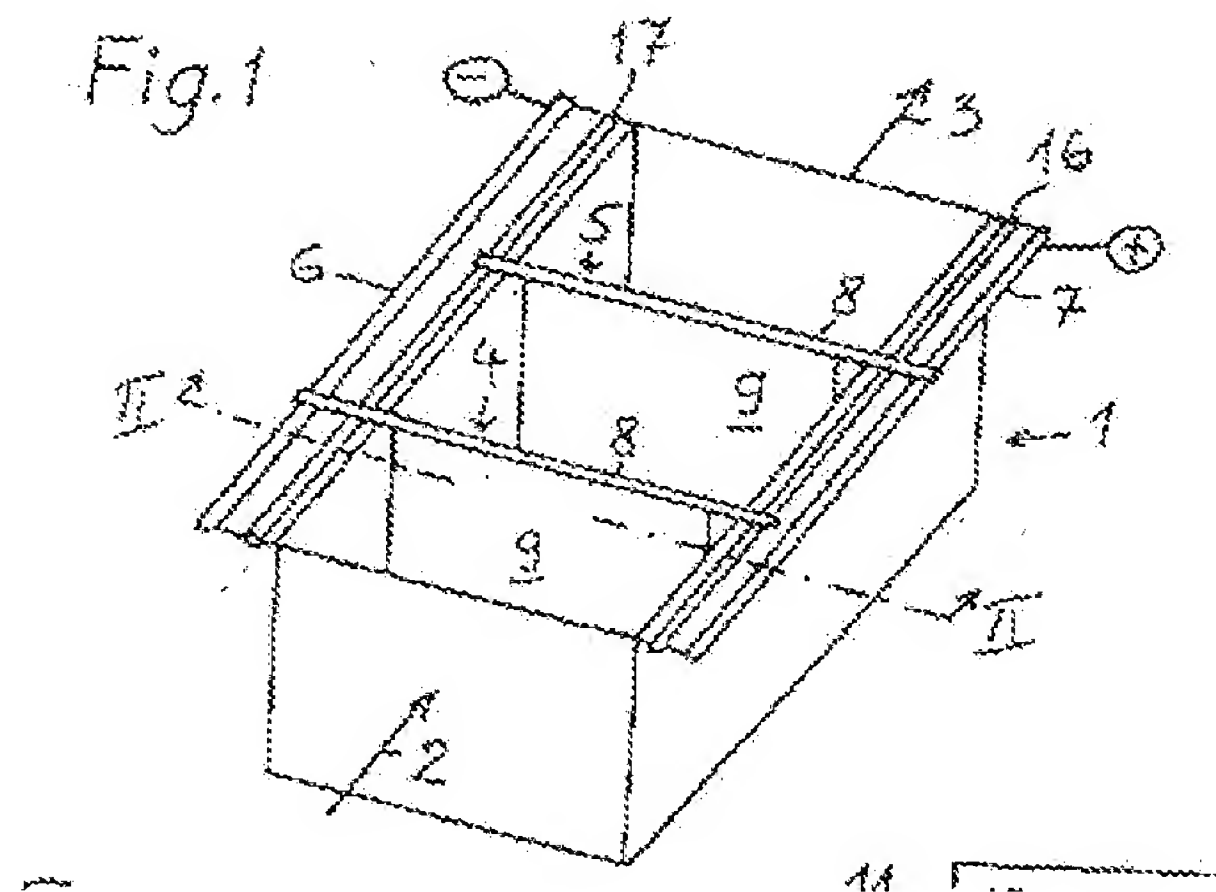
2, lines 38-42 of Nikola. Therefore, it was further agreed that Nikola also fails to disclose or suggest "the second end of the hanger bar of the cathode resting on a cathode equalizer bar disposed on one of the contact bars" as required by claim 1 or "the second end of the hanger bar of the anode resting on an anode equalizer bar disposed on one of the contact bars" as required by claim 1 (as amended herein to correct the typographical error). Applicants' thank Examiner Mendez for also agreeing during the Interview that, upon the filing of the present Response to the Final Office Action dated August 3, 2011, the rejection set forth in the Final Office Action would be withdrawn.

III. Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103

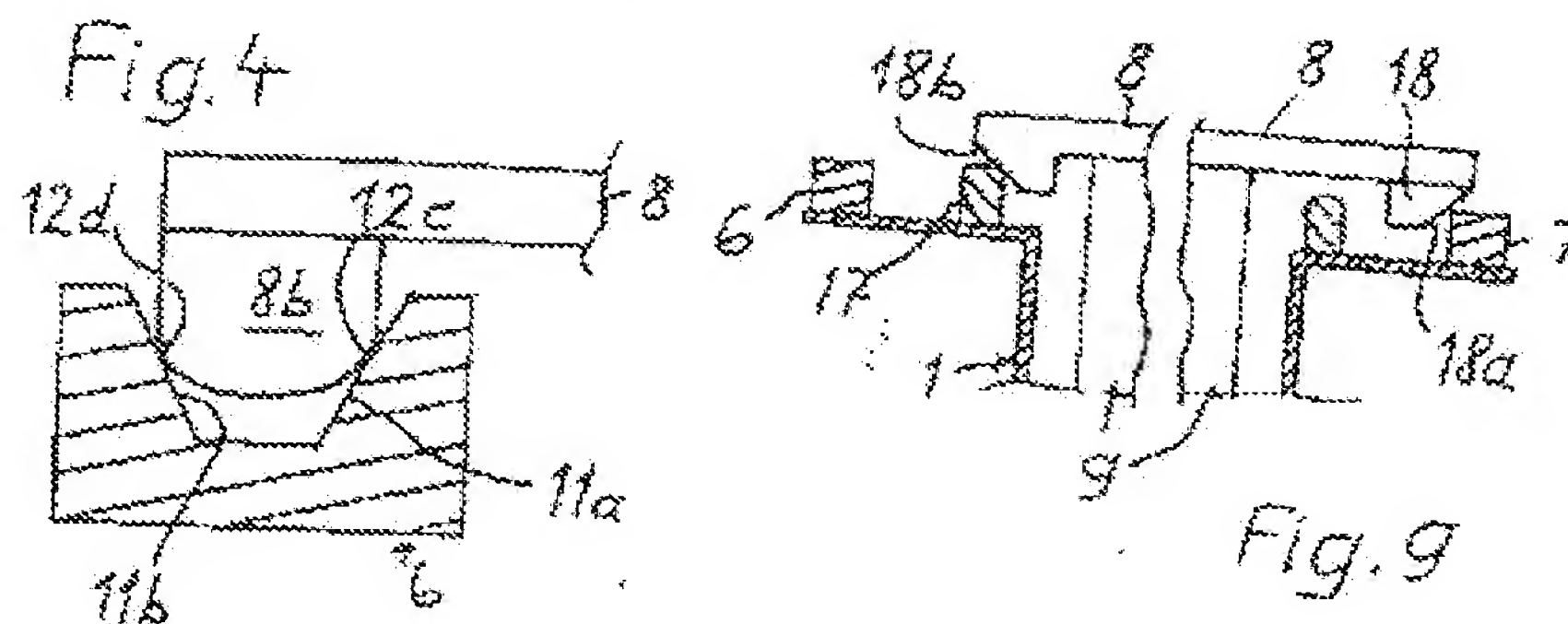
Claims 1-5, 7, 11 and 12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over U.S. Patent No. 5,679,240 to Anastasijevic et al. ("Anastasijevic") in view of Nikola. Claim 8 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Anastasijevic in view of Nikola, and in further view of U.S. Publication No. 2003/0173214 by Juric et al. ("Juric"). Claims 13-17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Anastasijevic in view of Nikola, and in further view of U.S. Patent No. 5,651,024 to Gensini et al. ("Gensini"). Claims 18-21 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Anastasijevic in view of Nikola, in further view of Gensini, and yet in further view of U.S. Patent No. 4,098,668 to Anderson et al. ("Anderson"). Claim 22 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Anastasijevic in view of Nikola, in further view of Gensini, and yet in further view of U.S. Patent No. 5,865,967 to Hiai et al. ("Hiai"). These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Independent claim 1 of the present application, as amended, recites "distributing current between the anode and the cathode by providing a first contact bar and a second contact bar at an edge of the electrolyte tank, each of the contact bars being connected to a power source, the first end of the hanger bar of the cathode resting on the first contact bar via a two-line contact and the first end of the hanger bar of the anode resting on the second contact bar via a two-line contact, the second end of the hanger bar of the cathode resting on a cathode equalizer bar disposed on one of the contact bars and the second end of the hanger bar of the anode resting on an anode equalizer bar disposed on one of the contact bars." It is respectfully submitted that Anastasijevic, Nikola, Juric, Gensini, Anderson and Hiai, alone or in combination, fail to disclose or suggest the foregoing features of amended claim 1.

As acknowledged in the Office Action, Anastasijevic fails to disclose or suggest the above-recited features of claim 1. *See* Detailed Action, Page 3. In the Office Action, Nikola was relied on as teaching these features. *See* Detailed Action, Pages 3-4. As discussed above, however, during the Examiner Interview of September 28, 2011, it was agreed that Nikola fails to disclose or suggest "distributing current between the anode and the cathode" or "the second end of the hanger bar of the cathode resting on a cathode equalizer bar disposed on one of the contact bars and the second end of the hanger bar of the anode resting on an anode equalizer bar disposed on one of the contact bars" as required by claim 1. Figures 1, 4 and 9 of Nikola replicated below clearly show that the front hanger bar (8, cathode (4)) in Fig. 1 rests on the cathode contact bar (6) at a first end and on an electroless¹ supporting rail (16) at a second end. The rear hanger bar (8, anode (5)) in Fig. 1 rests on the anode contact bar (7) at a first end and on a different electroless supporting rail (17) at a second end. *See* also col. 2, lines 38-42 of Nikola. Accordingly, Figure 4 shows the front hanger bar (8, cathode (4)) and, on the other hand, Figure 9 shows the rear hanger bar (8, anode (5)).



¹ The machine translation of "stromlose Stützschiene" (16, 17) from www.espace.net for Nikola (See col. 2, lines 38-42) translates stromlose as "electroless." "Stromlose" can also be translated as "non-conducting." See <http://dict.leo.org/ende?lp=ende&lang=en&searchLoc=0&cmpType=relaxed§Hdr=on&spellToler=&search=stromlose+st%C3%BCtzschiene> (last visited September 28, 2011).



Because neither hanger bar (8) of Nikola is electrically connected to both the anode (7) and the cathode (6), nor to each other, Nikola fails to disclose or suggest distributing current between the anode and cathode as required by claim 1. Moreover, if the front hanger bar (8, cathode (4)) of Nikola is considered to be a hanger bar of the cathode resting at a first end on a first contact bar, then the second end of the hanger bar of the cathode *does not* rest on a cathode equalizer bar disposed on one of the contact bars as required by claim 1. Rather, one end of the front hanger bar (8, cathode (4)) of Nikola rests on the electroless support rail (16). Similarly, if the rear hanger bar (8, anode (5)) of Nikola is considered to be a hanger bar of the anode resting at a first end on a first contact bar, then the second end of the hanger bar of the anode *does not* rest on an anode equalizer bar disposed on one of the contact bars as required by claim 1. Rather, one end of the rear hanger bar (8, anode (4)) of Nikola rests on the electroless support rail (17).

It is respectfully submitted that Juric, Gensini, Anderson and Hiai fail to correct the deficiency of Anastasijevic and Nikola discussed above.

Because each of Anastasijevic, Nikola, Juric, Gensini, Anderson and Hiai fail to disclose or suggest at least the above-recited features of amended claim 1, any combination of these references, to the extent proper, could not render claim 1 or any of its dependent claims 2-5, 7, 8, and 11-22 obvious. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the respective rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) based on respective combinations of Anastasijevic with Nikola, Juric, Gensini, Anderson and/or Hiai is respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing amendments and arguments, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to pass this application to issue.

If there are any other issues remaining which the Examiner believes could be resolved through either a Supplemental Response or an Examiner's Amendment, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number indicated below.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any unpaid fees deemed required in connection with this submission, including any additional filing or application processing fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or 1.17, or to credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 12-1216.

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Respectfully submitted,

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